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RUALSFJ/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA PRIORITY
INFO RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 0306
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 3820
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 6241
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USTR FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE;
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SECDEF FOR OASD/PA;
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PACOM HONOLULU FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION - NORTH KOREA/IRAQ - TOKYO

LEAD STORIES: Most Tuesday morning papers front-paged remarks by DPRK Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye Gwan during Monday's six-party session expressing his country's readiness to halt operations at Yongbyon after confirming that its frozen assets at the Macau-based Banco Delta Asia (BDA) have all been returned.

11. "Don't Play into North Korea's Hands" The business-oriented Nihon Keizai editorialized (3/20): "Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Glaser, meeting the press Monday morning in Beijing, announced that the US would release the entire amount of frozen DPRK-linked accounts, estimated at about 25 million USD, at the Macau-based BDA. The US move, made at the North's request prior to the resumption the same day of the six-party talks, was intended to give momentum to the talks on North Korea's denuclearization. While the move was welcomed by China, South Korea, and Russia, all of which have long taken a conciliatory line on Pyongyang, we cannot help but be skeptical. The North Koreans always use bluffs or brinkmanship to force concessions from other countries. Can the US get Pyongyang, which has already conducted a nuclear test, to abandon its nuclear programs in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner just by releasing those funds? We want to keep a close watch on progress at the six-party talks, and one point of concern is that the US has softened its stance on North Korea since that country's nuclear test last October."

12. "Iraq War Four Years On: Learn from the Mistakes" An editorial in the liberal Asahi stated (3/20): "Today marks the fourth anniversary of the start of the Iraq war, which the US and Britain launched amid worldwide concern and opposition. What has become of Iraq? Nobody

now thinks that Iraq and the rest of the world have since become safer.... Four years ago there was a 'crisis mentality' that military action against Saddam Hussein would be unavoidable, because he would pose a grave threat to the world were he to obtain weapons of mass destruction. But four years later, Iraq is in a state of civil war, with Shiites and Sunnis at each other's throats and 3.9 million people having fled the country.... One of the most serious mistakes in the war was the contention that Hussein had WMDs, which the US and Britain used to justify the war. The two nations then distorted information and manufactured crises."

SCHIEFFER